



REPORT ON THE 2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

To the citizens of the 16th Legislative District

STATE REPRESENTATIVE MAUREEN WALSH



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

I hope your summer is off to a good start and that you are enjoying all the season has to offer.

Our 2007 legislative session ended April 22 after 105 days of work. State lawmakers are now back in their districts spending time with their families, returning to their other jobs and **meeting with constituents**. I can tell you that it feels good to be back home.

This year we passed laws that will **assist farmers, help children in need, advance transportation projects** around the state, and meet the **local capital needs** of many communities. I am also happy to report the **Walla Walla Sweet Onion is now** – finally – the **state's official vegetable**.

Unfortunately, the 2007 legislative session also saw the passing of a huge state operating budget and continued inaction in addressing our health care crisis. I'll talk more about these issues in this newsletter.

This was my 15th year being directly involved with our Legislature. It was also my first legislative session without the support of my husband who passed away in April 2006. I am so proud of my kids who give me great strength, and **I thank and appreciate everyone who provided their support and input** this year.

I am truly honored to be your state representative.

Sincerely,

Rep. Maureen Walsh

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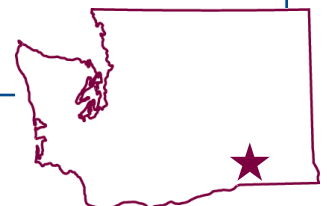
1-800-635-9993

Committees:

Appropriations
Early Learning and Children's Services
Human Services
Select Committee on Puget Sound

Task forces and councils:

Children's Trust of Washington
Joint Task Force on Administration
and Delivery of Services to Children
and Families
Caring for Washington Individuals
with Autism Task Force



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HOW YOUR TAX DOLLARS WERE SPENT

Concerns with the state operating budget

The state operating budget funds K-12 public schools, human services, higher education, debt services, prisons, natural resources, and legislative, judicial and government operations. The 2007-09 operating budget **spends \$33.4 billion**, with adjustments being made next year.

I voted "no" on this budget because it **spends far too much** and sets our state up for a **serious shortfall** in the future. It also offers **no tax relief for homeowners or employees of small businesses** despite the fact that state government had a \$2 billion surplus entering the 2007 legislative session. Here are some more budget facts:

- Grows state spending by 33 percent – or \$8.2 billion – since 2005
- Spends \$1.3 billion more than the state expects to take in through revenues
- Includes \$2.1 billion in new policy additions

Capital budget funds local projects

The capital budget pays for construction and repair of public buildings and long-term capital investments around the state. The 2007-09 capital budget **provides \$85.5 million for several important projects in the 16th District** (see below). **I voted "yes" on this budget.**

- Construction of a pedestrian bridge over State Route 395/Court Street in Pasco
- A rail transload facility for Port of Benton
- Facility construction and repairs to Columbia Basin College and Walla Walla College

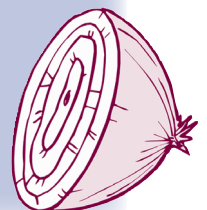
Transportation budget

The transportation budget pays for projects around the state, including roads, bridges, railways, ferries, and transit systems. The 2007-09 transportation budget **offers \$145 million for 35 projects in the 16th District.**

I voted "yes" on this budget because it **supports important local projects** in the 16th District. However, I remain concerned with continued cost overruns for projects and the failure to make a final decision on the Alaskan Way Viaduct in Seattle. I'd like to see these issues better addressed in 2008 and beyond.



Rep. Mike Armstrong joins
Rep. Walsh in serving Walla
Walla Sweet Onion sausages
at the Capitol.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE MAUREEN WALSH

HELPING CHILDREN IN NEED

I was honored to recently be included with 16 of my colleagues in the Legislature in receiving a **"2007 Champion for Children Award"** from the **Children's Alliance**. This statewide advocacy organization works to ensure that children have the things they need to thrive and focuses on health care, nutrition and foster care issues.

While I am proud to receive this award, **we must continue to look for ways to protect our state's vulnerable children**. For example, we continue to hear about unfortunate situations in which children must be removed from their homes and placed in foster care. It is important we **ensure** these **transitions** are **documented** and **safe**.

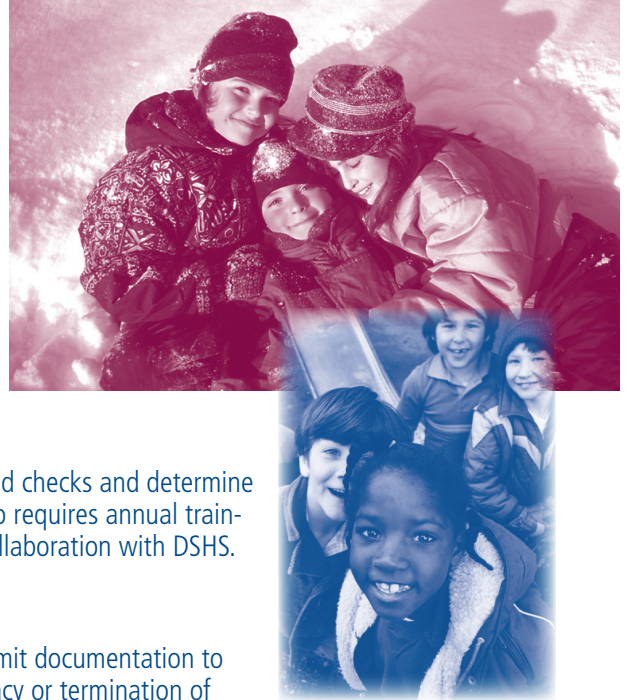
I sponsored two bills that will provide **new tools, accountability** and **collaboration** concerning the state Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). These bills were inspired by the stories of two children who were tragically murdered – **Sirita Sotelo** and **Raphael Gomez**.

■ Sirita's Law

Sirita's Law, House Bill 1333, requires DSHS to conduct background checks and determine services needed for caregivers prior to placing children in their homes. It also requires annual training of law enforcement on child abuse and neglect, and encourages new collaboration with DSHS.

■ Raphael Gomez Act

The Raphael Gomez Act, House Bill 1334, requires DSHS to submit documentation to the courts whenever it makes a recommendation or assertion in a dependency or termination of parental rights case.



ASSISTING LOCAL FARMERS



Agriculture is a huge economic driver in our state and it's important we do all we can to **ensure the industry is healthy**. The 2007 legislative session saw the passage of several bills that will **benefit Washington's farmers**. I was proud to join my 16th District seatmates, Sen. Mike Hewitt and Rep. Bill Grant, in **supporting** the following agriculture bills:

- **House Bill 1902** exempts labor and service from the sales and use tax on repairs to farm machinery and equipment.
- **House Bill 2352** exempts farmers and certain farming services from the business and occupation (B&O) tax. A farmer that rotates to another crop may not have the equipment needed to harvest or process the new crop, but hiring another farmer with the right equipment to provide these services triggers the B&O tax. This bill relieves farmers from paying the B&O tax for those services.
- **House Bill 1443** establishes a public utility tax deduction for the transportation of agricultural commodities if they are ultimately shipped out of state.
- **House Bill 1311** continues the Small Farm Direct Marketing Program, which helps small farms develop infrastructure, provides information for direct marketing opportunities to farmers, and helps farmers understand laws and regulations.

HEALTH CARE SOLUTIONS THAT MUST MOVE FORWARD



Our state is mired in a **health care crisis**. Too many people either cannot access or afford health insurance.

I joined Senate Democrats and House and Senate Republicans **in supporting bipartisan reforms** that would have **allowed small businesses to play a substantial role in helping to insure their employees**. Unfortunately, the majority in the House stripped these reforms out of Senate Bill 5930 after it passed the Senate unanimously.

I will continue to support these reforms and others with **the goal of making health insurance more affordable** for all Washingtonians:

- Allowing small businesses to offer health insurance to their employees that is flexible, low-cost and mandate-free
- Changing community rating laws
- Allowing any small-group plan to qualify for the Small Employer Health Insurance Partnership program



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RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

If you need information about state government, you may find the following Internet sites to be great resources. Or, you can always call or e-mail my office.

houstorepublicans.wa.gov/walsh – offers my biography and views on various issues.

access.wa.gov – provides access to state agency services, including applying for unemployment benefits, renewing car tabs, and much more.

leg.wa.gov – offers committee meeting schedules and nearly everything else you'd want to know about the Legislature.

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